Not Just To Do, But To Do Well

'The really important thing is not to live but to live well'- Socrates to Crito

One acceptable way of defining education is that it is a system by which human resources are nurtured for the benefit of humanity. Time was when education in our country was the pursuit of the privileged and less than a dream for the majority. For example, literacy rate among women which now is near 65% was around 6% when the country wrested freedom from the colonial rulers. The sorry state has improved and even daily wage earners, if not otherwise constrained, have started sending their children to school today. What is more important is that education is now in the public domain, for we find electronic as well as print media discussing topics involving the academia, such as inadequacy of infrastructure, political interference or degradation of academic standard. Although the entire system exists for the learners, the role of educators is no less crucial, for without their enthusiastic midwifery nurturing of dormant human resources is bound to remain unachieved.

UNESCO at first set four objectives of education in the 21st century: *to know* (acquiring factual information), *to do* (translating theory into practice), *to live together* (imbibing camaraderie), *to be* (developing potentials). Interestingly enough, all these are related to self-enrichment. Although an individual is a member of society, these goals do not clearly spell out whether this self-enrichment has any social dimension at all. Why should society bear the expenses required to run a system which benefits the individual rather than society as a whole? Therefore, UNESCO in 2008 added one more end to clear up the confusion. The new end is *transforming oneself & society*, an objective which clearly indicates that education is not an exclusively self-profiting business but an instrument for social transformation.

Although the financing from public exchequer for running primary and secondary education can hardly be mooted, funding of higher education often raises many brows. The stock arguments here are: 1) the number of beneficiaries is too small, 2) there are other more important priorities of the government, 3) the return is disproportionately poor, 4) research which is the mainstay of higher education is often found to be under-focused in our system. But since the noble aims of higher education are human progress & national development, this type of counter-posing of different sectors of education (that is, higher education *versus* primary/secondary education) is actually a diplomatic excuse for trimming subsidy. If priority in one sector demands de-prioritization of another, the relation is oppositional (*i.e. versus*). But in reality the relation between higher education and primary/secondary education is non-oppositional, complementary. It is wrong to pit the former against the latter, because we need both. Will it not be wrong to say 'Food versus Drink' instead of 'Food and Drink', as both are essential? Incidentally, UNESCO recognizes this truth, or else it should not distinguish between tertiary education and higher education. While the former is a sort of continuation of what has been learnt up to the secondary level, the latter is a higher pursuit devoted to production and development of new knowledge for the advancement of humanity.

The goals of HE set by UGC during the XI Plan period were in harmony with the schemes for social development. The three pronounced goals were *Access***,** *Equity and Quality*: *Access* for inclusive growth, *equity* to ensure social justice and *Quality* for helping Indian HE attain global standard and even move beyond that. At the end of the plan period it is found that despite some progress, achievement has fallen way behind the set target. As regards *Access*, the enrolment average is now marginally above 11%, the set target and world average being 15% and 23.25% respectively. *Quality* denotes a prestigious position in a graded scale of excellence. It has been said that *Quality* in HE is the combined fruit of teaching and research. While research is the generation of knowledge, teaching is its dissemination without which the fruits of research remain un-harvested. Metaphorically speaking, teaching minus research is blind, research minus Teaching is lame. As regards *Quality*, the best Indian University cannot find a place in a list of the 200 top-ranking universities of the world. While our research is repetitive and degree oriented, our teaching hardly takes into cognizance of what changes have taken place since we joined the profession years back.

As for *Equity*, let us take up the question of gender equality. As per 2011 census, female literacy rate in the country is 65.46% much below the male literacy rate of over 80%, and the national average of 74.04%. Before the independence, in figuring out the details of women education in India Annie Besant projected the patriarchal needs as national needs: "But the national movement for the education of girls must be one which meets the national needs, and India needs nobly trained wives and mothers, wise and tender rulers of the household, educated teachers of the young, helpful counsellors of their husbands, skilled nurses of the sick, rather than girl graduates, educated for the learned professions." In the post-independence period Radhakrishan Commission first criticized this gender bias of education: "The present system of women's education, based as it is upon men's needs, does not in any way make them fit for coping with the problems of daily life." But home was the *given* space for women in Dr Radhakrishan's time. So the scope of women education was charted out accordingly: "Her education should make her familiar with problems of home management and skill in meeting them, so that she may take her place in a home with the same interest and the same sense of competence that a well trained man has in working at his calling." In NCERT recommendations (1975) one notices salutary proposal for correcting this gender-bias: "In the educational systems areas of home management should be projected as joint responsibility of all the members." Moreover, dependence of women on their male counterpart, glorified in the past, was rejected as a hoary value, a ploy for domestication of women: "Dependence of girls and women as a traditional value must be rejected from which it follows that emphasis has to be laid on equal commitment for work at home and outside, by both the sexes." Subsequently National Policy on Education (1986) also cast meaningful focus on girls' education. Yet breakthrough in female literacy [which varied from 86% (Kerala) to 20% (Rajasthan) as per 2001 census report], still seems a remote dream. Prof. R. Govinda, Vice-chancellor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, has justly maintained that "policy-wise, we are on the right track.

… After 25 years of prioritizing girls' education, we have seen a tremendous change. But a lot more needs to be done."

Why have we failed in achieving what is to be achieved? Educational policy-makers refer to many issues which have gravely problematized cultivation of human resources in HE institutes of the country. Increased enrolment means higher expenditure. Where is the money to come from? Even if Government accepts its responsibility, mobilizing huge amount of resources is not at all easy. Inviting private entrepreneurs is synonymous with commoditization of knowledge. This will land us on the opposite pole of what Newman had envisaged when he described knowledge as its own end. Admittedly, the private providers have no other stake but profit maximization. Besides, access can be guaranteed only by compromising standard. As quality and quantity are inversely proportional, increase in quantity will inevitably result in dilution of standard.

Problems of higher education may be manifold but we must evolve means to make the best of a bad business. The first positive step is organizational diagnosis by what is commonly known as SWOT analysis. Incidentally, SWOT is an acronym for Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat. Strength is the enabling power/potentials which is available at present. For example, a legendary teacher may be a source of Strength to an institute before his retirement. The source of Strength sometime may be external; as for example, UGC assistance when it comes to the institutional account. The source of Opportunity is always external, say 'Autonomous' status granted to a college by a statutory body. The profits accruing from Opportunity is a matter of speculation because Opportunity is linked to the future time. In other words we must wait to evaluate how the autonomous status is used for institutional development. Weakness is what retards the growth. Like strength, it is always related to the present time and the source is internal. For instance, poor staff strength is an organizational weakness at a given point of time. Threat or Challenge is actually an unaddressed Weakness that has grown so huge in dimension that it eats into the vitals of the institute and is all set to destabilize its activities. Being lackadaisical to the issue of student-absenteeism or exam-reforms are threats of our educational institutes which needs must be checked now or never.

The second step in improving functions is activating the IQAC. The problem with our academic peers is that they are hardly interested in learning from what is happening around. When it is a question of benefit, we enthusiastically refer to other colleges and universities, even those situated outside our state. But when it is a question of greater commitment or working for longer duration, all comparison is loathed. One must give up the habit of self-certification that we are the best. Public perception, where it is not moulded by window-dressing, may be a reliable indicator of the strength or weakness of our performance. Even when we are doing satisfactorily, there is always scope for improvement. Each member of IQAC may be in charge of at least one field of activity and may be encouraged to formulate slogans to redress the institutional weakness in a particular field of activity: *e.g.* 'Attract' for Attendance, 'Quantify' for Evaluation, 'Contribute' for Research, 'Get assessed' for Teaching Performance and the like. Another

strategy for augmenting performance is turning a sizable portion of one's attention to the mediocre and the low-performer, for by doing that one may reap a richer harvest of success. The advanced learners are already 'advanced'- can grasp easily, assimilate quickly and can tap in various sources of learning. Instead of fretting oneself sick to raise the grade of a handful of such learners from 80% to 84% the teacher may leave more space for such learners so that they may continue self-exploring with self-confidence. Directing more attention to the weak learners may be a rewarding endeavour for the institution as a whole. We generally measure an institution's success by showcasing the names of so called achievers, the university toppers. But one island of excellence in a sea of mediocrity cannot earn credit for an institution. Rather, it may be interpreted as the achievement of the individual learner in which the institute cannot claim any credit. But the average success percentage, if raised from 45% to 60%, will be acknowledged as institutional credit, for any social system is meant ultimately for the masses and not the individual.

The third step, undeniably, is the use of ICT which helps us burst the limits of our performance. The greatest advantage of ICT is that here all material is available for all users from all location at all times. ICT on the one hand augments human ability and makes the user of a PC with internet the citizen of the globe; on the other it makes some forms of management infinitely easy and almost fool-proof. For example, Biometric attendance mechanism may save the time of calling out Roll Nos. in the class; installation of CCTV in the examination hall may ensure more intense vigilance; OMR sheets may help us achieve objectivity in marking and make our evaluation more reliable to students and less time consuming; on-line admission with the help of correctly customized software may make student admission not only fair and transparent but also less troublesome for students from far-off locations. Teachers may use *turnitin.com* for online detection of plagiarism. Technology has facilitated publication, so much so that without going to the door of any publisher with a copy of manuscript one may opt for self-publication with ISBN by *Amazon.com*. Unlike a traditional book with limited number of copies not readily available for consultation, the content of this e-publication will be accessible to millions from all over the globe. Teachers with ideas about innovative courses, not supported by BoS of a university, may post the course on *udemy.com* and even earn a lot from users of that course. Above all, there is Wikipedia and *kora.com* ready with answer to any question for which our teachers used to spend hours visiting the National Library.

The fourth step is problem solving through self-empowerment. Most often we find fault with the system and use that as an excuse for our under-performance. Modern theorists of management argue that as constraints cannot be wished away, we must learn the art of working within constraints and turning adversity to good account. This can be done by self-empowerment, for the dependent for ever is destined to be doomed. If the power goes at midnight, why not change the fuse rather than wait till morning for the electrician to come and restore the supply of power. Self-empowering is the art of reducing the vast field of problems which is beyond one's control. For self-empowerment what is required is a shift from D^3 (Dump, Delay, Delegate) to C^4 (being

Conscious, Concerned, Committed, Capable). C^1 is being *conscious* of what is retarding our progress. Even when we are conscious, no change is will take place if we take the problem casually, that is, if we are not *concerned*. Being concerned, however, is a psychological response; it is to be translated into action by *commitment*, an undertaking. And commitment comes to no use if we wait for the situation to improve without exerting ourselves. Hence for accomplishing anything we must explore *self-capability*, the C^4 of the formula.

The fifth step towards better performance is using statistics for motivational purposes. The learners and educators of a college or a university are human beings with developed brains. So they cannot be made pro-active by notification or under any threat of disciplinary measures. Successful teaching as well as learning is always passionate and passion evaporates under compulsion. Rabindranath Tagore rightly held that we must treat our teachers as *acharya* rather than as *shikshak* so as to make them feel impelled to outdo their own performance. Performance in a human resource development industry, therefore, is to be augmented through motivation and rational explanation of the consequences of under-performance. The IQAC may think of ensuring punctuality by making a statistical calculation of what lack of punctuality really means. Ten teachers having five classes each on a particular day go to class ten minutes late. This amounts to loss of 500 minutes or more than 8 hours of teaching-learning. Similar statistical calculation is likely to have a positive impact on the community and create motivational impetus for dedicated performance.

Another important strategy of human resource management which is very popular in the corporate sector today is what is known as *appreciative enquiry*. It is a management formula based on analysis of human psychology. The human mind is prone to finding faults. We are seldom self-critical but we delight in faulting other's action, attitude, principles or policies. By doing this we antagonize others and make enemies of our colleagues. *Appreciative enquiry* is a positive exercise which avoids criticism as far as practicable. It is known to all that if we suspend the use of anything, it gradually sinks into atrophy. If criticism is avoided, that is, if negatives are not highlighted, these are likely to disappear from our nature and, paradoxically, the loss is a profit to us. So by consciously practicing *appreciative enquiry* we will outgrow our habit of showing strong reaction and relishing authoritarian sternness. By avoiding criticism and appreciating the qualities of everybody we will be successful not only in disarming our opponents but turning them into our friends, for appreciation always begets appreciation. *Appreciative enquiry* thus helps us harness positive energy and ride on the potentials of human beings in the development of human resources.